

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary
(Baton Rouge, Louisiana)

For Immediate Release

September 3, 2008

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

Last month, Russia invaded a sovereign neighbor and violated Georgia's territorial integrity. The people of Georgia withstood the assault from the Russian military, and the international community rallied to stand with the people of Georgia and their democratically elected government.

Early in the crisis, I directed a series of steps to demonstrate America's solidarity with Georgia, including instructing Secretary Gates to oversee a mission by the U.S. military to provide humanitarian aid for the people of Georgia. Since the conflict began, our Nation has provided nearly \$30 million in humanitarian assistance to Georgia, including more than 1,200 tons of food and other relief supplies delivered by the U.S. military. While that mission continues, the United States is also prepared to help Georgia rebuild and regain its position as one of the world's fastest growing economies.

On Monday, September 1, European leaders announced that the European Union is prepared to provide aid for reconstruction in Georgia, including the regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and would soon convene an international conference to assist Georgia in its reconstruction. The United States applauds the actions taken by the European Union, and we will participate in the EU's reconstruction conference.

As part of America's contribution to this international effort, today, I am announcing \$1 billion in additional economic assistance to meet Georgia's humanitarian needs and to support its economic recovery. More than half of these funds will be made available in the near term and will support reconstruction efforts in Georgia, assist the Government of Georgia in leading the nation's recovery, and

meet ongoing humanitarian needs, including the resettlement of displaced families. The balance of the funds, together with assistance from the European Union and other partners, will help the Government of Georgia rebuild critical infrastructure and help local communities and businesses get back on their feet. My Administration looks forward to working with Congress on elements of this package. The Vice President will brief Georgia's leadership on this package when he visits Tbilisi tomorrow.

Today, I have also directed a number of Federal agencies to expand their support for Georgia's economic recovery. U.S. Trade Representative Susan Schwab will take steps to expand trade and investment in Georgia, by negotiating an enhanced bilateral investment treaty and expanding preferential access to the U.S. market for Georgian exports. Secretary of Commerce Gutierrez will assist U.S. firms interested in trade and investment in Georgia and dispatch a trade mission to Georgia in the coming weeks. Secretary of Transportation Peters will make available risk insurance to support U.S. maritime commerce with Georgia. Secretary of the Treasury Paulson will continue to lead our efforts to coordinate assistance efforts with international financial institutions, and Secretaries Rice and Gates will continue to coordinate with our international partners to ensure that our aid is delivered swiftly to those who need it most.

Georgia has a strong economic foundation and leaders with an impressive record of reform. Our additional economic assistance will help the people of Georgia recover from the assault on their country, and continue to build a prosperous and competitive economy.

#